

## EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RELIGIOUS PRESS.

The agencies of the Gospel are manifold. God has arranged so that all his people shall have a share in the salvation of souls and in the joy of the great harvest day. None will be excluded from such a share.

First come the parents. They do more than all others to shape the character of their children and lead them to Christ. Then comes the ministration of the preacher. Along with this is the labor of the Sunday school, and of the societies of the Church. They all co-operate in promoting the honor of the Redeemer and saving souls.

In this co-operation, where does the religious press come in? What share does it have in the work of the Lord?

The church paper is not a conspicuous factor. Its work is done in the closet, where other eyes do not penetrate. Because its work is not obvious some men fail to appreciate its usefulness. But at the risk of an accusation of self-laudation, we will make bold to speak a little of its usefulness.

We were present once when one of our foreign missionaries expressed her estimate of its work. She was starting for the far East. A man who occupied a place on the editorial staff of a religious paper was talking to her of her privilege and wishing that he could have the privilege for himself of joining the mission band. Her reply was pointed. "No, we do not want you to go with us to the foreign mission work. You are doing more for the cause here at home. We want you to remain at your desk and week by week to keep our work before the people."

It is even so. The press has an influence different from that of the pulpit and this missionary worker had seen it. The pastor must direct his preaching mainly to the one subject of penitence and faith. He can not give a message every week on the subject of missions; he can take it up only occasionally. But the family journal can give a column in each issue to this important work. We know of journals that have done this, every week, for ten, twenty or thirty years. And the effect has been to prepare the ground for the recent forward movements in mission work and to help make these movements successful and effective.

Not in this sphere only, does the press have a strong influence. To a considerable extent it has secured success to the college work of our land. The uneducated boor does not want a college education. Only he who has a thirst for knowledge will want it. This thirst comes through a training in thinking. The daily press gives but little help in this direction. Even the monthly magazines concern themselves so largely with fiction as not to develop the powers of the mind. The family journal is the one great instrumentality in laying before the child, and the boy, and the young man, literature that will whet their appetites for high mental culture.

It is true that the religious paper could not thrive were it not for the preparation of the readers in the school-room, to enjoy its columns. The school produces the demand for the high-class journal; the journal produces the demand for a college education.

The religious press serves to direct the attention of the people to the localities where their help is needed. It describes the vacancies and opportunities for work, and it portrays the blessing that follows well directed effort in these waste places. Thus does it greatly promote the

Master's cause. Our orphanages will all testify to the value of the press in their sustenance.

Perhaps, above all, the greatest work of the religious journal is in the promotion of Sabbath observance. The family attend Sabbath school and church in the morning and at night. Then there is the long afternoon, with no specific occupation. The temptation to levity is great. Without some helper many of our youth would not "turn away the foot from doing thy pleasure on my holy day." Without some provision for sacred occupation, Satan would find much mischief for Sunday afternoon. Here comes the regular visit of the weekly paper. It comes with freshness, with something suited for every age, with that which is not frivolous, and not dry. And through its influence the Sabbath afternoon is made a season of profit.

## THE EMPTINESS OF SPIRITUALISM.

A spiritual existence after death and immortality are among the confident and precious beliefs of all Christians. "He brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel." Our Church teaches that "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory." Of the spirit life after death, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." One day there is to be "a revelation of the sons of God." But many have had a great desire for a present knowledge of the spirit world, and sought intercourse with the spirits of the departed. With some bereaved and sorrowing ones it is a longing for communion with friends who have gone within the veil. With some it is in hope of a confirmation of their faith of immortality, and with some it is a vain curiosity to look into things which are not now made manifest.

No doubt there will always be people of these classes, and from them a following be found for the promoters of various forms of so-called spiritualism. What a field is afforded for speculations and legends and myths, and illusions, and false claims. Promoters will be found, some of whom are possessed with a mania, some of whom are more or less self-deluded, and some of whom are frauds of the basest and most contemptible kind.

About fifty years ago, there was an exploitation of spiritualism in this country beginning with the Fox sisters and others in Western New York, originating a sect, quite widespread in New England and the west. Communications with the spirit world was claimed through table rappings and other sounds, and through certain persons claiming to be mediums. There were seances and manifestations of spirit-power. Many times have these things been investigated. Commissions and societies have been formed to collate the facts and test the alleged experiences. Some had no faith in any communications with spirits yet thought they found things that, while not supernatural, were mysterious and could not be brought to human understanding. So we have had "the transferences of thought," and telepathy and mesmerism and mind reading, a variety of theories and practices embraced in Occultism. A Psychic Society in England has included in its membership some men of science; of medicine, of philosophy and psychology.